1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

CLOTHING

291 MEN.—The loin cloth, breechcloth, or waistcloth (M.: *palpura;*[17] T., P.: *wah;* U.: *ani*) was formerly the only article of dress worn by men on ordinary occasions. It consists of a long, narrow strip of bark cloth, 8 to 9 feet long and 12 to 15 inches wide, which is wrapped several times around the loins, while the ends are left to hang down in front and behind. Occasionally it was made from cotton, and ornamented with colored patterns. The loin cloth has now practically disappeared among the Miskito, being worn only by boys, but it is still in use among the grown-up Sumu. Now all the men from [177] both tribes own loose cotton shirts (M.: *prak;* S.: *parak;* from the English "frock") and trousers (M.: *trâusis*, from the English; T., P.: *kal-anin;* U.: *kalson*, from the Spanish "calzón") with the tails [439] generally not tucked in. They make these articles themselves from imported cloth or they obtain the finished garment by way of trade. Formerly the Sumu used a sort of shirt or poncho, consisting [287] merely of a sheet of tree bark with a hole in the middle for the head; it was tied under each arm with a piece of fiber. This primitive garment was called *kahlâû* or *kahlo* by the Sumu; its Miskito name is unknown. When the Indian is in the open at the approach of rain he pulls his shirt off and covers it up with large *Heliconia* or *Musa* leaves in order to prevent it from getting wet.

WOMEN.—The only garment worn by the more primitive women of both tribes is a wrapper (M.: *kwaluntara;* T.: *ipnapan;* P.: *ipnapani, asna-pani, amat-pani;* U.: *asna-pahka*), a piece of cloth, 2½ to 3 yards in length, which is wrapped about the hips and extends from the waist, where it is fastened by tucking in one end, down to the knees. Now- [439] adays it is made of imported bright-colored cloth, but formerly the common tunu bark cloth was used for this purpose. The upper [287] part of the body was entirely naked in former days, but now the women wear a sleeveless garment of imported cotton goods, which is cut very open and is known by the English name *prak* (= "frock") among the Miskito; the Sumu call it *kahlâû* (T., P.) or *kahlo* (U.). Little girls wear a sort of loin cloth, as do the boys, but with broad end pieces which look like small aprons in front and behind; this garment is called *niko* by the Miskito and *taîai* by the Sumu.

292 DRESS OF THE CHIEFS.—Men of rank wore, besides the loin cloth, a sleeveless cotton tunic (M.: *tupal;*[18] S.: *kiskura*) which hung down [531] to the knees; it was beautifully embroidered with the down of the muscovy duck and dyed by means of vegetable juices. A girdle, sash or belt (M.: *yalasawa;* S.: *kamak-sitna*) of the same material was tied around the waist over this sort of mantle; it was about 6 feet long and 6 inches wide.

[17] This name is mentioned in 1699 under the form *purpray* (M. W.: 307, 308).
[18] Compare the word "huipil" in Mexican-Spanish.

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FESTIVAL DRESS (MISKITO).—M. W. (308) gives us a description of the gala dress of the Miskito which was worn on festal occasions. Besides the loin cloth the men wore cotton bands with bright feathers attached around their wrists and above and below the knees. The body, or the face only, was painted with pinewood charcoal, over which a "varnish" of turpentine was applied. On the breast was a thin plate made of a Spanish dollar piece beaten out flat, the successor of the gold plate met on this coast and in Costa Rica and Panama at the time of Columbus. Between the shoulders was suspended a tube made from a shin bone, with a bunch of feathers, while sea shells depended from the ears. A rod of bone or cane was worn at the pierced septum of the nose; a turtle hook, inserted in a perforation of the lower lip, supported a pendent plate of brass or shell.

Nowadays the Miskito wear on feast days old coats which they have obtained from the foreign residents. The bright-colored necktie, worn sometimes without any collar, is then allowed to fall over the coat. The socks, which are not worn on ordinary occasions, are pulled over the trousers like overboots. Bright-colored handkerchiefs (*aikar*) are also in great favor.

FESTIVAL DRESS (SUMU).—At their festivals the Sumu of to-day paint the entire body red and black, so that it is impossible for them to recognise each other. At such an occasion their only clothing consists of a loin cloth and a headdress (*sira*). The latter is made from the split stem of a kind of bamboo, known locally by the Miskito name *bratara*, from which the bark has been taken off. The different slices are painted and then tied together with black cotton thread, and the cap thus formed is ornamented with the feathers from gaily colored birds, as parrots, macaws, and toucans, or the curly head feathers of the curassow. From this headgear depends a piece of "white tunu" or tree-bark cloth; this part of the cap is called *pakna*. It is painted with various designs, and hangs down the back to the hips. On the neck, wrist, and knee they wear, besides, strings of beads worked into designs; round the upper part of the arm they tie a cotton string to which small feathers have been attached.

HEADGEAR.—Many Indians buy hats which are known by the Spanish name "sombrero" (*sumuru*, *sumuru*) or the English "straw hat" (*trahat*, *tarahat*). They are little used in their daily occupations and constitute above all an article of ornament. To the women the hat is, however, unknown, nor is there any other sort of headgear used by them.

FOOTGEAR.—Sandals are not known in the region under consideration, but they are used by the Paya. Moccasins are made occasionally by the Miskito, and shoes are bought in the local shops, but there are no native names for these articles. The women do not use any footgear at all except in the more advanced communities.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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PRUDERY.—The sentiment of prudery is natural with these people. Few of them will submit to medical examination and on that account there are few Indians working at the gold mines of Pispis, where every applicant for work is obliged to pass such an examination.

DRESSMAKING.—All the various garments were made formerly from tree bark or cotton. Raveneau de Lussan (439) states, however, that the Miskito made also clothing and blankets from a grayish stuff which they obtained from the bastard palm (cabbage palm?). The clothes (M.: *kwala;* S.: *asna*) from imported cotton goods are generally made by the men. Hand sewing machines may be met with in many huts. Needles (M.: *silak;* T., P.: *silip;* U.: *akusa*, from the Spanish "aguja") are bought in the local shops. The washing of the clothes is, however, the work of the women, who beat them at the river banks with wooden clubs (*tamtam*); the leaves and the fruits of a small tree (*Sapindus saponaria* L.; M. & S.: *sniwawa*) are used as soap.

BODILY ORNAMENTATION AND DECORATION

BODY PAINTING.—Black and red paint is still applied as an ornament, but more frequently the object is to protect the skin from the sting of certain insects, from the rays of the tropical sun, and even the cold. Perhaps originally this was also done in order to scare the enemy at a battle, for the body was painted in a very hideous manner when an armed expedition was being organized. The paint replaces to some extent the Indian's clothing. The black color is made use of by the men and the red by the women, just as was already the custom among the Miskito during the latter half of the seventeenth century (Exquemelin, Engl. ed.: 252).

The reddish pigment, which may vary from yellow to brown, is obtained from the seeds of a shrub or small tree, called annatto (arnotto) and faroah in the British colonies of tropical America, and "achote" or "achiote" by the Spaniards; the Dutch in Surinam call it "orlean," while the French have given it the name "rocou," from *ruku* or *uruku*, used by certain Indian tribes of Brazil and the Guianas. Its botanical name is *Bixa orellana* L.; the word *Bixa* is derived from the ancient language of Haiti.

The seeds are gathered as soon as the capsules split open, and put in boiling water to remove the testa, or waxy substance, surrounding them. This red waxy coloring matter is then passed through a sieve and made to coagulate with the aid of the leaves of the *tiswat* tree or the seeds from the "ojo de buey" (*Mucuna* sp.; M.: *kwakwa;* S.: *wabala*). It is kept in small calabashes or bottles, which may be seen depending from the rafters of the Indian hut. Before use the pigment is tempered with native vegetable oils. It is applied by

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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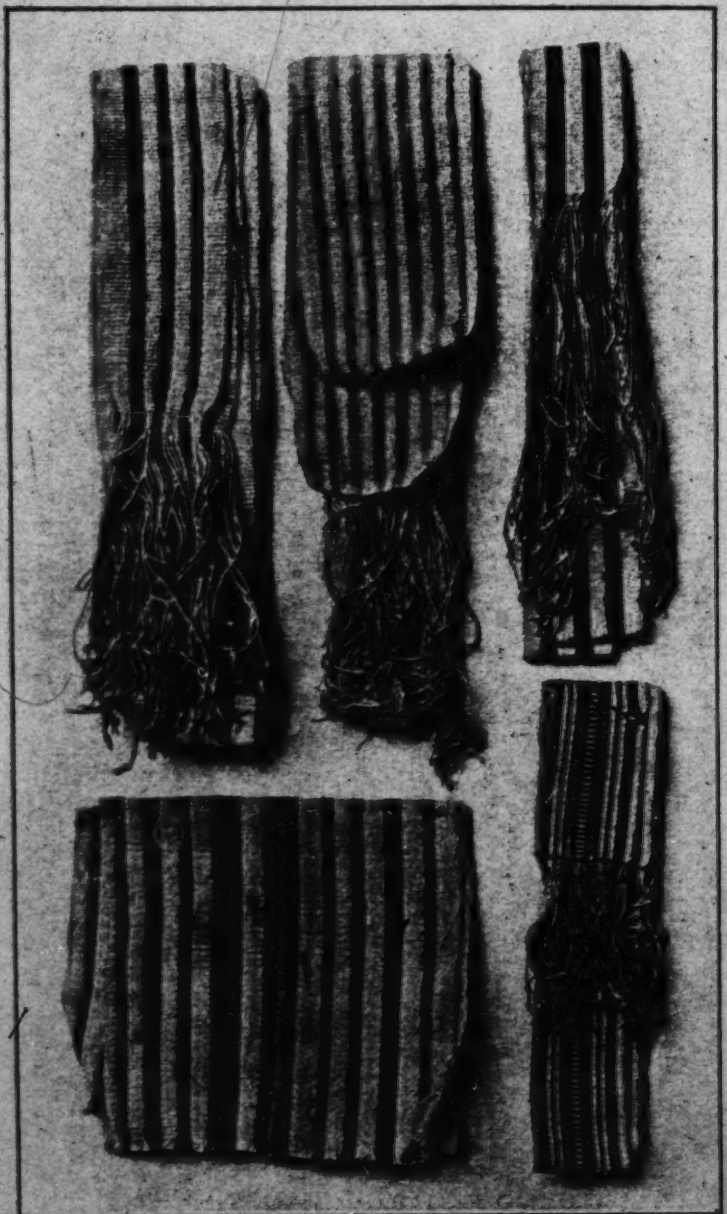

FOUR COTTON GIRDLES AND A PIECE OF COTTON CLOTH TO BE USED IN MAKING A HUNTER'S BAG

Sumu of Rio Boeay and Rio Wanpuk

[p. 50 B]

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
SA15 Mosquito SA15

time rectangular houses with a hip roof used by single families are built. The steep roof, thatched with palm leaves, was supported on posts. All houses have walls about 4 feet (1.3 m.) high. Lofts for storing food and for sleeping are made by laying split bamboo sticks across the beams. Household furniture consists of mattresses of bark or deerskin, platform beds (*Paya* and *Northern Sumo*), sitting hammocks, wooden chests, three- or four-legged stools, and a notched-post ladder. Fires are built of three logs on slightly raised mud platforms inside the houses. Stored near these are cooking pots, bamboo tongs used to remove food from the fire, gourd containers and colanders, wooden spoons, ladles, and sections of bamboo used to haul water and to store beverages.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Bark cloth was formerly the most common fabric, but it is now being replaced by cotton cloth, usually obtained by trade. Native cotton cloth was used largely for ceremonial and festive occasions. The *Mosquito* made blankets and clothing of palm fiber.

The male costume consists of a breechclout and poncho. The latter is tied under the arms and secured around the waist with a belt. Everyone went barefoot, but occasionally *Paya* men wore tapir-hide sandals and *Mosquito* men moccasinlike footgear. Women wore a knee-length, wrap-around, bark-cloth skirt, but the upper part of their bodies was nude. Children went nude until they were 8 or 10 years old, when they adopted a breechclout (*Sumo, Mosquito, Paya*). *Sumo* chiefs used a long tunic and a sash, apparently made of cotton. It was dyed and embroidered with crane feathers. These costumes, or modifications of them, are still worn by the more conservative tribes, but commercial cloth is becoming more common and European styles are being adopted.

Men cut their hair short, but occasionally elder men left a lock at the back of the crown (*Mosquito*). In about 1850 the *Sumo* tied their hair into a queue, which was oiled or greased; at present they cut it short with bangs over the forehead. A crude comb was made of sticks tied together. Women cut the front hair in bangs allowing the rest to hang freely. The men attached feathers to their hair but women decorated theirs with flowers and colored bands. At time of mourning the hair is cut off short. Both sexes devote considerable attention to their hair.

Nose pins and lip and ear ornaments of gold or turtle shell were worn. The *Mosquito* hung shell or brass plates from the lower lip. Conical or bell-shaped lip or chin ornaments were worn by the *Kukra*. Wooden plugs worn in the ear lobes were common. On festive occasions the *Mosquito* and *Sumo* wore either a cotton headband decorated with feathers or a cap made of bamboo decorated with feathers and with long, painted, bark-cloth streamers. The *Mosquito* hung metal or shell plaques and ornaments made of bone and feathers about their necks. *Sumo* women

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
SA15 Mosquito SA15

PLATE 25.—Sumo and Mosquito Indians, Nicaragua. *Top: Sumo* man. *Bottom: Mosquito* village, Pearl Lagoon. (Courtesy American Museum of Natural History.)

[p. 228-A]

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15

comparison. The dietary in urban areas of coastal ports is predominantly one of imported and home grown cereal grains, whereas the river Indians consume a greater quantity of meats and fresh fruits. On the basis of the investigation by Roberts[35] it may be presumed that the variation in diet may account for the impairment of growth of coastal Indians. In specific physical anthropology there is sufficient reference elsewhere (vide Schultz[28]).

The Miskito Indians have an abundance of hair growth extending low over the forehead; it is scarce on other parts of the body. The hair is commonly black and very straight, although several Indians were noted who had reddishbrown (a metallic auburn) shade of hair. Gray and white hair rare and beard growth is very scarce. Chest and pubic hair is absent among pure Indians.

Although there are no accurate figures dealing with longevity the impression gained was that once an Indian lived to be over twenty years of age he had good chances for old age. Conzemius[1] in 1922 met a number of Indians who were young children during the volcanic eruption of Coseguina on the bay of Fonseca in 1835. Our survey revealed a number of Indians who remembered missionaries who had been in the territory sixty or seventy years ago. The Indians themselves informed us that many die between the ages of fifty and sixty years of age, with the chief cause of death being the fever (malaria). As will be shown, infectious disease takes a heavy toll of life during infancy and in early senescence. It is to be noted that the situation may change and the death rate in later life may increase. In former days sickly and deformed children were either buried alive or starved to death. Only the strong and healthy were allowed to grow up. Today there is no such control; Indians with deformities will secrete them or bandage the part involved; tolerance to diseased people has increased.

GENERAL CUSTOMS OF THE MISKITO

Today the men wear loose cotton shirts *(prak)* and trousers *(transis)*; the shirt tails are usually not tucked in. The older boys wear a similar garment but commonly among youngsters the dress is chiefly a loin or breech cloth *(palpura)* or nothing at all. Many of the women wear dresses *(prak)* although some of them and the girls wear a piece of cloth *(kwaluntara)* which is wrapped about the hips and extends

[35] Roberts, L. J.; Blair, R.; Lenning, B., and Scott, M. Effect of a milk suplement on the physical status of institutional children: I. Growth in height and weight (pp. 287-300). II. Ossification of the bones of the wrist (pp. 494-509). III. Progress of dental caries (pp. 805-823). Amer. Jour. Dis. Children, 1938, *56*.

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15

from the waist to the knees. Bark cloth is still used and is an excellent clothing material; tumu bark being the most commonly used. However, today both men and women obtain cheap cotton material from traders and with it fashion their clothes. No undergarments are worn. In former times gala costumes were worn at festivals; today the chiefs or head men will wear old coats obtained from foreign residents. Many Indian men buy hats, especially straw ones *(sombrero, sumruru, sumuru, trahat, tarahat)*. Women occasionally wear these hats, which constitute to them an ornament. Some Indians in villages wear footgear but this is rare. Most of them go barefoot. The washing of clothes is the women's work and it is done by beating the garments at river banks with wooden clubs *(tamtam)* and the use of soap made from the leaves and fruits of a small bushy tree *(Sapindus saponaria* L.).

In a previous report by Conzemius[1] it was stated that the black and red paint was applied to the skin as an ornament. This was in 1931; today this process is rarely executed although some still apply a reddish pigment (varying from yellow to brown) in order to protect against insects or the chapping effects of weather. The pigment is derived from the seeds of a shrub called annato (Spanish: *achote, achiote,* or *bija)* or rocour *(Bixa orellana L.)* The seeds are removed from the capsule and placed in boiling water. The red waxy material which separates is collected and coagulates when mixed with the leaves of the *tinwat* tree. It is usually mixed with one of the native vegetable oils prior to use. Black paint derived from tree gums are used by the Sumu as well as colored clays. In fact, colored clays have gained considerable favor during these later years.

Tattoo is rarely seen among the Río Coco inhabitants, even though it was commonly used. It is achieved by the simple method of puncturing the skin with steel needles and the application of gun powder into the incisions. Today necklaces and other decorations are rarely seen. Bead and shell necklaces were observed only on a few persons in the upper Coco River. In general one sees a few trinkets used which were obtained from traders.

The men cut their hair short and some of the tribal elders leave a lock of it just back of the crown of the head. The women have long hair except in front where it is common custom to cut just above the eyebrows. This prevents the hair from entering the eyes. Both sexes devote much care to the hair and oil it frequently. The oil *(batana)* is obtained from the seeds of the oil palm *(Elaeis melanococca)* and is mixed with rather potent perfumes obtained from traders. From these traders they also obtain inexpensive combs and brushes.

Although body deformation was carried out by Sumu especially